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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001540

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)  
SUBJECT: OSCAR KASHALA -- NOT THE FORCE HE THOUGHT HE WAS

REF: KINSHASA 1251

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Former DR Congo presidential candidate (and American citizen) Oscar Kashala, who once claimed to be the next "power broker" in Congolese politics (reftel), has proven little more than a flash in the pan. He won less than four percent of the vote in the July 30 presidential election, and his party failed to capture a single seat in the new National Assembly. While his party's candidates could win a few seats in the upcoming provincial assembly elections, Kashala wields very little influence and offers no apparent advantages to any potential ally. End summary.

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KASHALA: THE ONCE-PRETENDING KING  
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¶2. (C) In the months leading up to DR Congo's July 30 presidential election, cancer specialist Oscar Kashala -- only recently arrived in the DRC after years of living in the U.S. -- claimed he would be a serious challenger to better-known and better-financed candidates such as President Joseph Kabila and Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba. Kashala argued that as a native Congolese from the Kasai region -- the base of longtime opposition figure Etienne Tshisekedi and his Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) -- and with no involvement in government corruption or the outgoing transitional administration, he would enjoy widespread support.

¶3. (U) Election results demonstrated that Kashala's support was limited. Kashala came in fifth in the overall vote, ahead of some other prominent candidates such as Vice President Ruberwa. Nonetheless, he won just 3.46 percent, compared to Kabila's 44.8 and Bemba's 20.04. Kashala's best showing was in Eastern Kasai province, where he seems to have sought to position himself as a new Kasaian leader. Kashala won four of Eastern Kasai's 18 electoral districts, while taking 18 percent of the total vote. He also took one district each in Western Kasai and Bas-Congo provinces.

¶4. (U) Parliamentary results showed a similar lack of support for Kashala's Union for the Reconstruction of the Congo (UREC) party. It did not win a single seat in the new National Assembly, despite Kashala's claim that UREC and its allies constituted the second-largest group of candidates after Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Development. Nor was UREC close to winning in any single district. Nationwide, the 213 UREC candidates received 92,769 votes in just 72 of the DRC's 169 electoral districts. This was less than one-half of one percent of all votes cast in the parliamentary elections.

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HOW IT WENT WRONG  
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15. (C) Kashala told us after the first-round vote that he was unable to conduct a full-fledged campaign throughout the country and deliver his message to all voters because Presidency officials had restricted his movements and resources. He charged that government officials had prevented his planes from entering the country, held campaign materials at ports of entry, and expelled or arrested some of his advisers.

16. (C) Kashala's electoral tactics tell another story. Civil society representatives in the two Kasai provinces have told us that Kashala did not succeed in trying to portray himself as the next Tshisekedi. Viewed by many as a carpetbagger, Kashala nevertheless presented himself as Tshisekedi's heir-apparent and the future leader of the UDPS. In one post-election meeting he said that Tshisekedi's "time had passed" and that he (Kashala) was ready to step into the role Tshisekedi had long played in DRC politics. This attitude

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rubbed many Congolese, particularly Kasaians, the wrong way.

17. (C) UREC's poor showing in National Assembly elections stemmed in large part from poor campaign management. Many candidates who ran under the UREC banner were not well-known in their districts, and some had moved there immediately before the campaign. Kashala and other UREC officials did not provide sufficient or timely funding to their candidates. According to one UREC candidate in Eastern Kasai, Kashala provided each candidate with only 2,000 USD for the entire

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campaign, and those funds were distributed only a week before the vote.

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STILL IN FOR THE NEXT ROUND  
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18. (U) Kashala recently returned to Kinshasa after being in Boston since mid-September. He told the Ambassador October 3, however, that he will be returning to the U.S. for a while before coming back to the DRC before the end of the month. Kashala spoke of establishing an NGO or think tank group to further U.S. interest in and ties with the DRC. UREC is fielding 429 candidates for the 632 seats in the upcoming October 29 provincial assembly elections, far fewer than many of its opponents. In the current coalition-building for the second round of elections, little if any mention is made of Kashala or his party.

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COMMENT  
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19. (C) Kashala's showing in the July 30 elections shows that he miscalculated his support. In the near term at least, he is a weak political force, and neither Kabila nor Bemba are apparently actively seeking his support. End comment.  
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